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EDITORS' PREFACE

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The contributions presented in this issue deal with a range of debates and questions in contemporary Arab-Islamic thought, focusing especially on the ideas, and key methodological approaches, of prominent twentieth-century Arabic-speaking thinkers who attempt in various ways, and from various intellectual positions, to revive (*iḥyāʾ*) and renew (*taǧdīd*) the tradition of Islām against the backdrop of modern thought. Historically speaking, the endeavour toward reviving the cultural and religious legacy of Islām within the context of modernity began in the early nineteenth century in direct response to European invasions of the Muslim lands, starting with the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798. Indeed, in many ways, contemporary Arab-Islamic thought emerged in response to the shock of Western modernity – that is, the unexpected shock that left Muslims with a feeling of inferiority and backwardness vis-à-vis the Christian West due to the latter's economic, political and technological advances, and military superiority. In the face of this somehow traumatic event, one question, which would be repeated countless times in ideological writings, historical studies, and even fictional works, became especially urgent: "Why did the Renaissance, which fostered the Age of Enlightenment, emerge out of Western thought, not Arab-Islamic thought?" Thus, when Muslim thinkers began to understand why modernity has arisen in the West, they were conscious of the close correlation between the development of European intellectual culture and its culmination in the (re)birth of the Renaissance culture in all its multifarious aspects.

To be sure, to explain the factors that stimulated the emergence of Western modernity one needs to account for the historical origins of the Renaissance. In other words, to reflect upon Western modernity is essentially to reflect upon the historical origins of the Renaissance. But what precisely does the term "Renaissance" mean, and what does it tell us about the transition from pre-modern to modern Europe? Put in very simple terms, what is now called the Renaissance, that is, the "age of transition to the modern world", signifies socio-political, economic, and cultural processes, made possible in the 14th and 15th centuries first and foremost thanks to the dissolution of the feudal mode of production and its replacement with new conditions that led to the capitalist mode of production. These processes in turn made possible the rupture with the medieval past, thus providing "some of the foundations for the later Scientific and Industrial Revolutions" – including the rise of Protestantism, a renewal of interest in classical learning, and the invention of the printing press" (J. J. Martin, 2003:

30; A. Lucas, 2010: 987). Thus what is now called "Renaissance" is, culturally speaking, a transformation accomplished through a process, "which was marked particularly by a revival of the influence of classical antiquity" (G. Griffiths 1988: 92). Put in a nutshell, changes in material circumstances culminated in the 15th century in a whole new mode of thinking, which made its first significant impact with the revival of interest in the legacy of Greek rationality.

If we now look to the Arab-Islamic context, we almost inevitably end up turning our attention to the widely used Arabic equivalent term for 'renaissance', *nahḍa*, which designates two separate kinds of revivals: first, the revival in medieval times known as the "Graeco-Arabic Renaissance", which marks the rebirth of the Greek legacy in the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries of Islām (Kraemer 1992: 135; also F. Rosenthal 1975: 1-14; D. Gutas 2012: 1-11); and secondly, the above-mentioned revival attempts in the modern era, initiated in response to Napoleon's invasion in 1798.

The Graeco-Arabic *nahḍa* in medieval times: why did it fail?

The Renaissance in medieval Islām took place during the reign of the ʿAbbāsid's beginning in the 3rd/9th century until about the 7th/13th century. The extraordinary success of this Renaissance, which we know today as the "Graeco-Arabic *nahḍa*," had its roots in material conditions that gave rise to power and economic wealth, which in turn stimulated the intellectual and social dynamism of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate. Indeed, both power and economic wealth were crucial to the making of the Arab-Islamic culture and its leading place in the medieval world. Already during the early centuries of its reign, the ʿAbbāsid caliphate expanded its rule to the Eastern Mediterranean region, North Africa and large areas of central Asia. As a result, most of "Byzantium's eastern trade" came under Islamic control (A. Dal, 2010: 28; H. C. Evans 2012: 4-11). The growth of trade in these newly conquered territories – which also resulted in ʿAbbāsid control of seaports and sea routes in the Mediterranean, Black Sea, as well as the Indian Ocean - led not only to economic growth and centralisation of administration but, as we now know, also to a process of cross-cultural fertilization. More precisely, the basic precondition for cultural prosperity in the ʿAbbāsid era was the prosperity in the ʿAbbāsid economy. This prosperity was a major factor behind the new *Weltanschauung* under which the new elite could unify despite its ethnic, cultural, and religious diversities. This trajectory of increasing complexity at the economic and the cultural levels in the cosmopolitan capital of Baġdād, beginning especially with the reigns of al-Manṣūr (714 AD – 775 AD) and Harūn ar-Rašīd (786 AD – 809 AD), fostered new forms of scholarly inquiry in response to certain epistemic demands that had not existed in the past, that is, before the

phase of the caliphate's dynamic transformation and the rise of the intellectual climate in which this transformation took shape (from the 8th and 9th centuries AD onwards). The Graeco-Arabic renaissance, which embraced "the translation movement of ancient science and philosophy from Greek into Arabic," saw daylight precisely in the context of this climate.[1]

Among other things - for example, the manifold contacts of the Arabs and Muslims with large parts of North Africa, West Asia and al-Andalus, as well as the previous cultures of the Mediterranean basin, including the Near Eastern Hellenistic culture - this renaissance gave expression to a tradition of science and philosophy, comprising among many others, thinkers such as Kindī, Farābī, Ibn Sīnā, at-Tawḥīdī, Ibn Miskawayh, Ibn Māğa and Ibn Rušd. Notwithstanding their differences, these thinkers shared a common oeuvre that can be defined in terms of three features: "(1) adoption of the ancient philosophic classics as an educational and cultural ideal in the formation of mind and character; (2) a conception of the common kinship and unity of mankind; and (3) humanness, or love of mankind" (cf. Kraemer 1992: 10). In addition to this tradition and, of course, the earlier religious traditions of exegesis (*tafsīr*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and *ḥadīṯ*, two other traditions developed, more or less in the same period: (1) the theological tradition, known as *ʿilm al-kalām*, whose development into a systematic discipline based on rational arguments is intimately connected with the school of the Muʿtazila; (2) the mystical tradition known as *tasawwuf* (or *ʿirfān*, i.e., gnosis) that favors spiritual experience rather than rational/discursive knowledge.[2]

Without dwelling further upon the historical aspects of this picture, or entering into any further details about its multifarious implications, in relation to Islām's wider development as a belief system (*ʿaqīda*), we cannot refrain from asking the question of how and why the Graeco-Arabic renaissance in medieval Islamic culture deviated from its historic progressive path.

To answer this question, several modern scholars have pointed to a number of political and ideological factors, including among other things:[3]

1. The disintegration of ʿAbbāsid authority in ʿIrāq, in the early tenth century, and the declining hegemony of the ruling caliphal elite in power and decision-making centers at different levels,

[1] For more on the political, social, and ideological factors behind the Graeco-Arabic translation movement, see cf. Gutas (2012), esp. part 2.2.-3, 4.1-2.

[2] Of course, this division between the different traditions should not be understood in this strict sense of absolute separation. In the context of Islamic culture, the various Islamic traditions of knowledge emerged and existed in interdependency with each other.

[3] I make no claims whatsoever that the factors mentioned here constitute an exhaustive list.

mainly as a result of civil wars, as well as territorial losses and the loss of political and economic sovereignty – which was always dependent on the security of Baġdād and other urban centers such as Kūfa, Baṣra, and Samarrā' and the security of their frontiers. These developments, and many of these geopolitical fragmentations, which (as Šawqī Ḍayf shows[4]) ultimately led to the creation of mono-confessional enclaves and minor - relatively independent - dynasties, in the place of the poly-ethnic, central authority in Baġdād - was greatly aided by the influx of the "semi-nomadic" Selğuk Turks into the upper levels of the caliphal administration[5]. The Selğuks, who had been hired during the reign of al-Muʿṭasim (r. 833-844) to form a professional army for his "retaliatory expedition against Byzantium,"[6] were very often individuals with a military background. This was in sharp contrast to the former administrative machinery of the ʿAbbāsid government, which was run by employees with administrative skills. In contrast to this latter administrative class, which somehow formed a hybrid of Graeco-Arabic and Persian culture, the rising Selğuks succeeded gradually in dominating the army and in taking charge of the political authority in Baġdād, but showed - with just a few exceptions[7] - no serious interest in secular culture and learning[8]; instead - it is argued - they turned to the institutionalization of orthodox Sunnī jurisprudence and theology. From this point of view, due to this Selğuk influx, the official patronage of secular - and especially Greek - learning and culture of the early ʿAbbāsids, "which favored more rationalist schools of thought," was replaced by what is commonly called "the Sunni revival of the eleventh century."[9] Along with this development, which flourished at the expense of the intellectual diversity that had prevailed earlier, scholars also point to the exclusion of rationality in the field of theology due to the "permanent withdrawal of caliphal support for the Muʿtazila in the aftermath of the so-called inquisition (*miḥna*) instituted first by Caliph al-Mutawakkil and then by al-Qādir."[10] Ever since, Islamic legal and political thinking became less open to accepting the rational study of the Qurʾān, as the exegete (*mufassir*) remained within the descriptive task of, say,

[4] Šawqī Ḍayf (1973), 9-27.
[5] G. Ağoston, B. Masters (2009), xxv-xxxvi.
[6] J. S. Codoñer (2014), 279.
[7] For two of these few exceptions see S. F. Starr (2013), 395.
[8] However, this view seems to be contestable; see e.g., cf. S. F. Starr (2013), 394-406.
[9] G. Makdisi, (1973), 155-68; J. Berkey (2003), 189-202; D. Ephrat (2000), 1-6.
[10] R. C. Martin, et. al. (1997), 35. See also J. Van Ess (1997), 446-508.

explaining the meaning of the Qurʾānic passages in accordance with "the views of the companions [of the Prophet], and the opinions of the ʿulamāʾ (*aqwāl ʿulamāʾ al-salaf*).[11] This resulted in a mode of thinking, known as traditionalism, which has prevented Islamic thought from renewing itself, thus laying fertile ground for the age of decay (*inḥiṭāṭ*), largely by undermining the continuity and development of "the heritage of Hellenized Islam." [12] Furthermore, this traditionalism marginalized the discourses of the demonstrative and natural sciences, while at the same time not recognizing the priority of axiomatic rules (*al-istidlāl al-burhānī*) in theological and scientific matters. This, in fact, explains - at least, according to this perspective – why traditionalism continues to inform the patterns of thinking in post-colonial Muslim societies, including the cultural patterns that sustain both the patterns of teaching and learning within the educational institutions. Moreover, this approach asserts that the growth of Islamism in the early twentieth century is the result of the continued dominance of this tradition as it has instrumentalized its enormous moral authority to equate the entire enterprise of the *nahḍa* with religious reform (*iṣlāh*) on the basis of a fundamentalist vision of reality. This vision, which is rooted in the anti-rationalist and anti-philosophical Sunnī orthodox tradition, gradually became the central ideological frame of reference against which all kinds of knowledge must be legitimized.

2. The so-called "closure of the gate" of *iğtihād* and the prevalence of *taqlīd*, that is, "imitation, or adherence to the teachings of the classical jurists."[13] Due to this enclosure, which resulted in the formation of a fixed frame of reference within the field of the religious sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-šarʿiyya*), traditional ways of learning gained widespread legitimacy, both within and outside the religious education system. This, in turn, hampered the development of Arab-Islamic thought on a rational basis because of its almost exclusive reliance on transmitted tradition (*naql*) and consensus (*iğmāʿ*) rather than reason (*ʿaql*) and deductive inference (*burhān*). This whole tendency culminated towards the end of the 11th century with Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī (1058–1111) whose teachings became the guiding principles of the emerging Selğuk regime, which rejected all ideas and beliefs that deviated from certain core creeds of "orthodox Sunnī Islām" as idolatrous human inventions (*bidaʿ*). Indeed, Ġazālī's writings - we are told - were to play a profound role in future Sunnī thinking in two

[11] M. Q. Zaman (2012), 97.
[12] B. Tibi (2009), 255.
[13] F. E. Peters (2003), 117-118.

substantial ways: (i) he discouraged Muslim scholars from addressing substantive philosophical and scientific questions, or at least new points of view on the relation between faith and reason (*al-naql wa-l ʿaql*), between faith and free will (*irāda*) and (ii) led them to focus instead on methods for integrating practical morality, piety and spirituality properly into the frame of religious disciplines, first and foremost the legal aspects of Islamic law (*ʿulūm aš-Šarīʿa*) – as summarized in his: *Revivification of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm ad-dīn*) and *The Alchemy of Happiness* (*Kimiya-yi saʾadat*). This tendency of Ġazālī's work - which can be characterized as a theological pursuit of a "Just Balance (*Qisṭās Mustaqīm*)" that he envisioned as a return to the Qurʾān and the prophetical ḥadīṯ in accordance with *The Standard of Knowledge in Logics* (*Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī fann al-manṭiq*) – led Arab-Islamic thought towards a trajectory of de-Hellenization, and thus ultimately, de-rationalization. This development has played an important role in enabling the appearance of an Arab-Islamic mode of thinking, which "sought knowledge through gnostic illumination (*ʿirfān*)" due mainly to ancient oriental, Neoplatonic, and Manichean mystical influences.[14] With this regression towards irrationalism, which at least in Ġazālī's version meant the definitive refutation of Aristotelian metaphysics and natural sciences, Arab-Islamic thought has limited itself to justifying "the epistemological authority of the Qurʾān and *sunna*" (cf. Griffel 2009: 116), including such issues as the juridical context in which analogy (*qiyās*) can be applied, as well as doctrinal purity, that is, the definition of the "right belief or purity of faith [...] in accordance with the teaching and direction of an absolute extrinsic authority,"[15] all of which had culminated in the withstanding of "the intruding rational sciences" (*al-ʿulūm al-ʿaqliyya al-daḫīla*).[16] The central role that the traditionalist *ʿulamāʾ* played in shaping the mainstream Muslim imaginary, and the public discourse in general, both in the social and cultural realms, as well as the realms of learning institutions following the independence of many Arab states in the aftermath of World War II, reinforced the authority of this tradition, which in turn

[14] A. Tayob (2004), 115. This is the thesis famously advanced by M. ʿA. al-Ğābirī in his magnum opus *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* ("Critique of the Arab Reason"), which comprises, among others, two volumes: *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*: *Takwin al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* (1982); and *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* (1986). Others find such a thesis simply untenable as an interpretation of Ġazālī's enterprise, for example, F. Griffel (2009).

[15] Charles, J. Callan (1913), 330.

[16] Historians of Arabic science have devoted extensive studies to this problem of the decline of Graeco-Arabic science and philosophy after Ġazālī.

> reinforced the *ʿulamāʾs* "monopoly of definition and interpretation with regard to the sacred texts."[17]

The culture shock of Western modernity in the Arab-Islamic world: very brief overview

According to some scholars, the declining trend or the symptoms of intellectual stagnation in Islām continued, with varying degrees of intensity, until about the rise of the Ottoman sultanate, when Islamic culture started flourishing again due to a brief but powerful revival of interest in science, as the result of enhanced intellectual innovation and creativity during the centuries that followed the Turkish capture of Constantinople in 1453. According to others, the decline of Islamic culture continued even right up to the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in the late eighteenth century. Notwithstanding the accuracy of such opinions, and the positions in between them, the remaining section will pick up the thread at the point where we left off earlier, and develop another line of argument regarding the culture shock-experience of Arab-Islamic thought due to its encounter with the West. This will set the scene for the papers presented in this special issue.

In this account of the birth of the *nahḍa* - which is accepted by most scholars in the field - it is, roughly speaking, legitimate to say that the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt marks the decisive turning point towards the period of 'awakening' from centuries of intellectual slumber in the Arab Muslim world. The invasion was - one can argue, and it is indeed often argued - an unpleasant surprise for the Arabs at many different levels. Due to this invasion, which set the stage for the modern colonial encounter in the Middle East, Arab societies found themselves face to face with an advanced industrial power, combining in itself science-based technology, as well as economic, legal and bureaucratic rationality. Many, if not most, of these societies were still in the ruinous state in which the Ottomans had left them. That is, still agricultural, non-industrialized and quasi-feudal. Yet, at the same time, the Arabs' recognition of the new reality, that is, their realization of each and every aspect that formed part of the West's superiority was something that threatened the Arab Muslim world's collective self-image and self-esteem, both of which were so inextricably bound up with being 'the birthplace of civilization' (*mahd al-ḥaḍāra*).

The Arab Muslim world came to realize how very far it still had to go in order to rehabilitate this civilizational status - a fact that becomes apparent when looking at the writings of the "reformist" intellectuals of that period and its remnants within current debates. In

[17] Ursula Günther (2006), 142.

the course of its pre-modern history, that is, when Turkish conquerors established their rule within the "whole of the Arabic-speaking world (including Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Irāq, and Transjordan)," [18] Arabic thought had already undergone a temporary setback during the Ottoman era - which also to some extent had eroded its cultural sovereignty and gradually pushed the older rationality of medieval Arabic science into retreat. In other words, in this perspective, the series of devastating setbacks that the Arab Muslim world suffered in the aftermath of European colonial domination was nothing but the culminating point of tendencies that had begun decades before, starting in the Ottoman era and later accentuated with European "encroachment" on the Arab provinces within the Ottoman sultanate.[19]

After decades of Ottoman domination, and endless struggles to establish and defend a distinct Pan-Arab identity, the Arab Muslim world was now facing perhaps its greatest challenge: i.e., the colonial challenge of Western modernity. The Western and, to a lesser extent, Ottoman colonial presence, which are viewed by many scholars as keys to "the first glimmers of what could be called a national consciousness"[20] in the Arab Muslim world, provided fertile ground for self-critical and self-interrogating currents of thought (*naqd ḏātī*). In spite of their internal differences, these currents had two common features: on the one hand, the striving "for authenticity with regard to Arab cultural identity" in view of the challenges coming from the new colonial threat; and, on the other hand, the endeavour to locate - and provide solutions tailored specifically to - the structural problems behind the Arab world's cultural, social and technological stagnation.[21]

In a sense, therefore, the *nahḍa* project in the mid-nineteenth century was also the beginning of an emerging national consciousness within the context of both anti-Ottoman and anti-colonialist struggles for liberation and independence. Somehow, paradoxically, though emerging from a rejection of "Western cultural imperialism", the diverse currents of thought, which began to grow and flourish in the age of *nahḍa*, due in major part to this national consciousness, "aimed at achieving their goal through the selective adoption of Western modernity" (cf. Hassan 2001).[22] The proponents of these currents of

[18] L. Steet (2000), 32.
[19] S. Eddin Ibrahim (2006), 3.
[20] J. Shalan (2006), 129. Such a perspective might help one to better understand nationalism's instant and widespread appeal amongst the intellectual elite and its middle-class allies across the Arab world who felt increasingly threatened first by the Ottomans, and then by European colonialism. This explains, at least to some extent, why in that period renewal and reform became pan-national priorities for all Arab intellectuals.
[21] W. S. Hassan, (2001), 40.
[22] It is in this sense that one may understand Ḥassan Ḥanafī's remark that Arab thought consists of three different aspects: "(1) classical Islamic

thought were intellectuals, who, in different ways, sought to reconsider the problem of past and present (*al-māḍī*/*al-ḥāḍir*), of authenticity and contemporaneity (*aṣāla*/*muʿāṣara*), of heritage and renewal (*turāṯ-tağdīd*), in the hope of uncovering true potentialities of enlightenment (*tanwīr*) and creativity (*ibdāʾ*), as well as progress (*taqaddum*) and modernity (*al-ḥadāṯa*), especially in matters of national independence (*taḥarrur waṭanī*), liberty, equality and democracy. Even "women's emancipation" became a major issue of debate (*Taḥrīr al-marʾa*: Qāsim Amin, 1865- 1908). Among many other things, these thinkers also addressed issues regarding the "characteristics of despotism" (*ṭabāʾiʿ al-istibdād*: al-Kawākibī, 1888-1966); the revitalization of Islamic *šarīʿa* as a frame of reference for "Science, Civilization, and Technology" (*al-Islām Dīn al-ʿIlm wʾl-Madaniyya*: M. ʿAbduh, 1849-1905); the historicity of "Pre-Islamic Poetry" (*al-šiʿr al-ğāhilī*: Ṭāha Ḥussein, 1889-1973); the compatibility of Islām and secular governing, e.g., *al-Islām wa Uṣul al-Ḥukm* by ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Rāziq (1888-1966); while others, like Rifāʿa at-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801-73) and Ǧ. al-Dīn al-Afġānī, wrote about the marvels of the "Culture of Parisian Society" and the dangers of "agnostic naturalism" (*Ar-rad ʿalā ad- Dahriyyīn*).

Indeed, the early intellectual proponents of the modern Arab *nahḍa* were very often employing different - sometimes even conflicting - approaches and methodologies in their writings, and they were doing so for different purposes, and from different ideological standpoints, reflecting a tension between two different positions and, accordingly, two different understandings of the reasons and the cures for the stagnation into which Arab-Islamic societies had declined. In spite of this, however, they were at least implicitly engaged in the same task and responding substantially to the same "social and economic pressures" [23]; pressures, which in turn resulted in feelings of alienation, and the "feeling of disjuncture", that further undermined confidence in the value, utility and assumed superiority of the Arab-Islamic heritage as a "fundamental framework of reference" (*iṭār marğaʿī*).[24] Overcoming this alienation, which had befallen the Arab-Islamic world because of its failure to meet the new demands of cultural progress and modernity, became the common task of the pan-Arab national consciousness. In the minds of some of these intellectuals, the only recourse the Arab Muslim world had for overcoming this alienation was:

1. the appropriation of modernity, both in its material and institutional dimensions, as well as the secular epistemology of the human and social sciences; this, however, not in the sense of

heritage; (2) modern Western heritage; and (3) the present realities of the Arab world;" cited in Abū-Rabīʿ (2004), 64; also 97-98, and 129.

[23] D. Crecelius (1972), 191.

[24] Michaelle Browers (2006), 73.

mere 'westernization' (*taġrīb*), but in the sense of embracing the interpretative methodologies of modern human science within the broader aim of "reviving the heritage of Islamic rationalism" by critically rethinking the cultural and historical, as well as epistemological and ideological contexts in which they arose as an "underpinning for embracing modernity".[25]

In the minds of other intellectuals, however, the only recourse the Arab Muslim world had for overcoming this alienation was:

2. to reform (*iṣlāḥ*) the tradition by means of *iğtihād*, in order to re-interpret the classical legal, doctrinal and theological issues "on the basis of a return to the *ṣalaf al-ṣāliḥ* (the pious ancestors)" and by defining the *Šarīʿa's* main objectives in accordance with the overall public interest of the Muslim *Umma* (*maslaḥa*) in the face of - what these thinkers consider to be – 'un-Islamic' cultural influences .[26]

To put it another way, in the first of these two strands, the overcoming of alienation and attainment of political modernization, cultural revival, and socio-economic wealth, is possible only with the wholehearted embrace of the ready-made Western vision of modernity insofar as this entails the renewal (*tağdīd*) of Arabic rationality. From the point of view of the second strand, the overcoming of the state of nature is possible only through a return to the *Uṣūl*, that is, the fundamentals of Islām as founded by the authoritative sources the Qurʾān and the Sunna. On the basis of these sources, the classical traditions of ʿ*ilm al-kalām*, *tafsīr*, and *fiqh*, a reconciliation of faith and reason (*al-naql wa-l ʿaql*), of authenticity and contemporaneity (*aṣāla*/*muʿāṣara*) can be achieved as a solid foundation for the ideal society and state.

The papers in this issue engage with some methodological and thematic debates and questions that, in different ways, encompass insights from these two strands of thought, which have come more or less to dominate Arab-Islamic thought since the Arab *nahḍa* in the late nineteenth century.

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[25] Cf. B. Tibi (2012), 67, 74. Qāsim Amīn, Tawfīk al-Ḥakīm (1898-1987), Luṭfī as-Sayyid (1872– 1963), Ṭāha Hussein, and many others - mainly academics, intellectuals, and thinkers who "reflected the European orientation of Egyptian nationalism" represent the most sustained effort in this direction; J. Esposito (1998), 70.

[26] The proponents of this strand of thought belonged to the same generation, which included traditional intellectuals such as Ṭahṭāwī, Afġānī, and Muḥammad ʿAbduh; culturally speaking, these thinkers had an important impact by contributing to the nationalist and anti-colonialist orientation of the early reformist movement; see A. Belkeziz, (2009), ix-3, 40, and 27-47 (quote page 6); cf. Abū-Rabīʿ (2004), 206.

Safet Bektovic, in "Tradition and Modernity in contemporary Islamic Philosophy", offers a number of interpretations of what 'reform' (*iṣlāḥ*) means from the point of view of four contemporary Muslim intellectuals, with careful attention to their peculiar conceptions of "the role of philosophy in the interpretation of Islām", aiming to understand their differing methodological stances, along with the explanatory models they apply to diagnose, examine, and analyze the obstacles of Arab-Islamic thought's path towards modernization. Bektovic brings out the various complexities of these thinkers' views on the relationship between tradition and modernity, showing how the concealed interaction between ideology and methodology in the work of these thinkers shapes their viewpoints and the differences in interpretation among them.

Ulrika Mårtensson, in "Islamic Order: Al-Bannā's Hermeneutical Pragmatism and the Muslim Brotherhood's Interpretation", clarifies the significance of pragmatism in Ḥassan al-Bannā's religio-political thinking, as the touchstone for understanding the hermeneutics Bannā develops in his writings concerning Šarīʿa as a 'frame of reference' (*marǧaʿiyya*) for legislation, and his accompanying vision of an 'Islamic order' (*niẓām islāmī*). Challenging the prevalent view that Bannā's writings did not have any lasting effect on the subsequent development of the Muslim Brothers, especially as regards their transformation towards participation in electoral politics, and approval of democratic governance, Mårtensson argues that the recent breakthroughs, which have all contributed to radical changes in the Brothers attitudes towards the political sphere are, in fact, guided by a deep commitment to Bannā's contextual and pragmatist approach vis-à-vis matters of interpretation (*al-iǧtihād*) and legislation (*al-tašrīʿ*), and not a departure from, or a radical modification of, Bannā's ideas and methodology, as some modern scholars have suggested. Mårtensson concludes by pointing out this insight as an important point of departure for further research that acknowledges and takes seriously the pragmatist character of the Brothers oeuvre and their contemporary predicament.

Tina Dransfeldt, in "Transcending Institutionalized Islām, Approaching Diversity: ʿAbdelmaǧīd Šarfī's Conception of a Qurʾānic Ethics of Liberation", focuses on "the intellectual enterprise" of the Tunisian thinker, ʿAbdelmaǧīd Šarfī and his historical critical reading of the Islamic tradition. In specifically examining Šarfī's notion of the Qurʾān as an oral discourse rather than a written text, Dransfeldt shows how Šarfī's re-appropriation of the 'prophetic message' both (1) clarifies the pre-institutional phase of Islām, which preceded the formation of orthodoxy as a means of ensuring the confessional unity of the community; and (2) uncovers what was then an original pre-orthodox phase enriched by doctrinal diversity and characterized by open "dialogue, debate, and dispute". When seen in this manner, Dransfeldt argues, the hermeneutic position that Šarfī

adopts appears as significantly different from - not analogous to - the apologetic methods of inquiry that characterizes the Muslim reformist trend.

Joshua A. Sabih, in "Under the Gaze of Double Critique: De-colonisation, De-sacralisation and the Orphan Book", focuses on a rarely recognized discourse within contemporary Arab-Islamic thought, characterized by a 'double-critique' vis-à-vis the self and its object in its multifarious manifestations, regardless of whether this object takes the form of the 'West' or 'Islām'. As advanced by the French-Moroccan intellectual al-Khaṭībī, this theory uncovers the ideological limitations of the enlightenment narratives of the so-called 'West', which reinforces the euro-centric hegemony in matters of science and philosophy in the name of universality. At the same time this theory deconstructs politico-theological narratives that seek to sacralise the interpretations generated by Islamic orthodoxy. In replacement of these essentially theo-centrist traditions that dominate both sides, Khaṭībī proposes an entirely new way of thinking that sets out to explore, interpret and make sense of other cultures in terms freed of relations of domination and binary oppositions.

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